



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Signs Laws to Protect Vulnerable Adults and Seniors

New Laws Improve Procedures for Reporting and Resolving Problems with Individuals in Nursing Homes or Community Settings

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today signed two new laws that protect vulnerable adults and senior citizens across Illinois. The new laws improve procedures for reporting and resolving problems with individuals in nursing homes or community settings. Today's action is part of Governor Quinn's agenda to improve safety, care and quality of life for Illinois' senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

"Protecting our most vulnerable family members is one of the most important duties we have," Governor Quinn said. "These new laws will help ensure that our older adults and individuals with disabilities receive the highest quality of care no matter where they choose to live."

"The health and safety of our loved ones in nursing homes and long-term care facilities is one of our top priorities," Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck said. "New means of accepting and compiling complaints about a nursing facility will help the Department better identify new ways to investigate and substantiate anonymous complaints, ultimately helping to ensure quality care for residents."

"The law to expand the authority of the long-term care ombudsman will make sure that older adults and persons with disabilities ages 18 to 59 who live in a community setting and receive medical assistance waiver services and managed care services receive the same advocacy rights and quality of life protections as people who reside in nursing homes around

the state,” Department on Aging Director John K. Holton said. “Furthermore, this law now allows for ombudsman to have unrestricted private communication with any consenting resident without the additional consent of a legal guardian.”

House Bill 5703, sponsored by State Representative Michael Unes (R-Pekin) and State Senator Julie A. Morrison (D-Deerfield), allows complaints about a nursing home or long-term care facility to be submitted electronically to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). It also requires that complainant questions be provided on the IDPH website, along with notification that complaints made with less information are far more difficult to respond to and investigate. IDPH will annually review the complaint process and produce reports for long-term care advisory boards and councils, who can provide suggestions on how to investigate and substantiate anonymous complaints while eliminating frivolous ones. HB 5703 takes effect immediately.

“These are common sense reforms that allow for a better complaint and response process,” Representative Unes said. “This will make for a more fair procedure to investigate complaints and provide for facilities to better understand the complaints made with Public Health.”

Senate Bill 798, sponsored by State Senator Heather Steans (D-Chicago) and State Representative Naomi Jakobsson (D-Urbana), expands the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program to include advocacy for individuals in the Adult Protective Services program. The new law also allows ombudsmen more open access to individuals living in community-based settings and allows the ombudsman to report any business-related offense directly to the Attorney General or the county state’s attorney. The new law is effective Jan. 1, 2015.

"This law expands the long-term care ombudsman program, enhancing its capabilities, reach and coordination with other agencies," Senator Steans said. "It's good news for senior citizens and families navigating the often confusing world of long-term care, and it's an essential part of Illinois' ongoing nursing home reforms."

"With this new law, the ombudsmen will be able to have direct contact with our citizens living in community-based settings," Representative Jakobsson said. "That direct contact will enable the ombudsmen to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves."

Governor Quinn also today signed Senate Bill 2958, sponsored by Senator Steans and State Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), which creates a three-year pilot program for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) to administer medication in a limited setting under the supervision of a Registered Nurse. This will help fill the immediate need for more healthcare professionals created by the Affordable Care Act. The law is effective immediately.

In 2013, Governor Quinn signed legislation to create the state's first-ever Adult Protective Services Unit to ensure that every allegation made by those who are elderly or disabled is thoroughly investigated. The Governor has increased eligibility levels for households to qualify for programs such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the Illinois home Weatherization Assistance Program for those who need assistance paying heating

bills during winter months, with a priority given to households containing elderly members, persons with a disability or young children.

The elderly are often the targets of financial exploitation. Over the years, Governor Quinn has signed legislation that strengthens training standards for employees of financial institutions who have direct contact with customers, increased the penalties for financial exploitation of the elderly or those who are disabled, and for the Illinois Department on Aging to receive reports of elder abuse or neglect from senior service providers via the internet. He also signed legislation allowing the state to freeze a defendant's assets if he or she is charged with financial exploitation of the elderly, giving law enforcement a chance to obtain reports of elder abuse or neglect.

Governor Quinn issued an executive order to strengthen protections for adults with disabilities who are suspected victims of mistreatment in state-operated facilities and to ensure that potential cases be properly reviewed and referred to the appropriate authorities.

The Governor has proclaimed July "Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month in Illinois" every year since 2009.

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